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Security Council

Fifty-first Year

Provisional

3698th Meeting

Friday, 27 September 1996, 11 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Cabral	(Guinea-Bissau)
Members:	Botswana	Mr. Legwaila
	Chile	Mr. Insulza
	China	Mr. Wang Xuexian
	Egypt	Mr. Moussa
	France	Mr. De Charette
	Germany	Mr. Kinkel
	Honduras	Mr. Urbizo Panting
	Indonesia	Mr. Alatas
	Italy	Mr. Fulci
	Poland	Mr. Rosati
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Park
	Russian Federation	Mr. Primakov
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rifkind
	United States of America	Mrs. Albright

Agenda

The situation in the occupied Arab Territories

Letter dated 26 September 1996 from the Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/1996/790)

Letter dated 26 September 1996 from the Permanent Representative of Egypt to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/1996/792)

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The meeting was called to order at 11.20 a.m.

Welcome to Ministers

The President (*interpretation from French*): I should like, at the outset of the meeting, to acknowledge the presence at the Council table of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Chile, His Excellency Mr. José Miguel Insulza, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Egypt, His Excellency Mr. Amr Moussa, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of France, His Excellency Mr. Hervé de Charette, the Vice-Chancellor and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany, His Excellency Mr. Klaus Kinkel, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, His Excellency Mr. Ali Alatas, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, His Excellency Mr. Evgeniy Primakov and the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom, His Excellency the Right Honourable Malcolm Rifkind. On behalf of the Council, I extend a warm welcome to them.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the occupied Arab territories.

Letter dated 26 September 1996 from the Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/1996/790)

Letter dated 26 September 1996 from the Permanent Representative of Egypt to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/1996/792)

The President (*interpretation from French*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Algeria, Canada, Djibouti, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Malaysia, Morocco, Norway, Pakistan, Senegal, Tunisia and Turkey, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Levy (Israel) took a seat at the Council table; Mr. Baali (Algeria), Mr. Fowler (Canada), Mr. Olhaye (Djibouti), Mr. Campbell (Ireland), Mr. Owada (Japan), Mr. Al-Sabah (Kuwait), Mr. Moubarak (Lebanon), Mr. Agam (Malaysia), Mr. Filali (Morocco), Mr. Biørn Lian (Norway), Mr. Kamal (Pakistan), Mr. Ka (Senegal), Mr. Abdellah (Tunisia), and Mr. Tanç (Turkey) took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*interpretation from French*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 27 September 1996 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, which will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/1996/797 and reads as follows:

> "I have the honour to request that, in accordance with its previous practice, the Security Council invite His Excellency, Mr. Farouk Kaddumi, Head of the Observer Delegation of Palestine to the fifty-first session of the United Nations General Assembly and Head of the Political Department of the Palestine Liberation Organization, to participate in the current debate of the Security Council with regard to the situation in the occupied Arab territories, including Jerusalem, and the latest illegal Israeli actions in Jerusalem."

I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite the Head of the Observer Delegation of Palestine to the fifty-first session of the United Nations General Assembly and Head of the Political Department of the Palestine Liberation Organization, Mr. Farouk Kaddumi, to participate in the current debate in accordance with the rules of procedure and with previous practice in this regard.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Kaddumi (Palestine) took a seat at the Council table.

The President (*interpretation from French*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in response to the requests contained in letters dated 26 September 1996 from the Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia and Egypt addressed to the President of the Security Council, contained in documents S/1996/790 and S/1996/792, respectively.

I should like to draw the attention of the members of the Council to the following other documents: S/1996/772, S/1996/779, S/1996/786 and S/1996/791, letters dated 23, 24, 25 and 26 September 1996, respectively, from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General; S/1996/793, letter dated 26 September 1996 from the Chargé d'affaires *ad interim* of the Permanent Mission of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General; and S/1996/795, letter dated 26 September 1996 from the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People addressed to the Secretary-General.

The President (*interpretation from French*): The first speaker is the Head of the Observer Delegation of Palestine to the fifty-first session of the United Nations General Assembly and Head of the Political Department of the Palestine Liberation Organization, on whom I now call.

Mr. Kaddumi (Palestine) (*interpretation from Arabic*): For the past three days, the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territories have been brutally assaulted by the Israeli army and police forces, which are using armoured vehicles and helicopters against them. This Israeli attack has resulted in the deaths of over 86 martyrs and the injury of more than 1,000 people. It would seem from these developments that these brutal Israeli measures were planned in advance in the aim of undermining the achievements of the political process on the Palestinian track and of sending a warning concerning the other Arab peace tracks.

Following the declaration of its political programmes, the current Israeli Government took many provocative actions, including the resumption of settlement activities and the building of thousands of housing units. It has confiscated ever more Palestinian land in order to construct side roads to protect the security of the established settlements, which now number 124 in the West Bank.

Using bulldozers, the Israeli authorities abruptly destroyed the Borj Lukluk community centre for retarded people in East Jerusalem. It closed down a number of educational and cultural institutions, including Jerusalem University. It isolated the city of Jerusalem from other Palestinian territories and restricted the housing development in Arab neighbourhoods.

This has occurred despite Israel's pledges not to touch the Palestinian institutions, as indicated in Mr. Peres' letter to Mr. Holst, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Norway, in which he says,

(*spoke in English*)

"Dear Mr. Holst,

> I wish to confirm that the Palestinian institutions of East Jerusalem and the interests and well-being of the Palestinians of East Jerusalem are of great importance and will be preserved. Therefore, all the Palestinian institutions in East Jerusalem, including social, economic, educational and cultural, and the holy Christian and Muslim places, are performing an essential task for the Palestinian population. Needless to say, we will not hamper their activities. On the contrary, the fulfilment of this important mission is to be encouraged. This is a part of the agreements."

The letter is signed by Mr. Peres.

(*spoke in Arabic*)

Israel has also withdrawn the identity cards of Palestinian citizens in Jerusalem and prevented the citizens of Gaza from attending Palestinian universities in the cities of Jerusalem and Hebron. This Council has received several letters that underscored these facts and practices.

The current Israeli Government announced its political programme to strengthen settlement activity and to develop and expand settlements in order to receive more new immigrants. It also endorsed the use of force and repressive power by the army and security apparatus to secure, as it claims, the security of Israel. The political programme of the Israeli Government has emphasized the preservation of a united Jerusalem as the eternal capital of Israel under total Israeli sovereignty. This contravenes the rules of international law and resolutions adopted in international legality, which reject the annexation of Jerusalem and any change to its status.

Moreover, the political programme of the Israeli Government is based on a number of negative positions, including no return to the 4 June 1967 borders; no withdrawal from the Syrian Golan; no discussion of Jerusalem; which is a foregone conclusion and not open to debate; and no establishment of an independent Palestinian State. That political programme has indicated that the Israeli Government will define zones for security and settlement, along with the self-rule zones, in which it will build more and more settlements for the protection and safety of Israel. Israel has made such threats more

than once. As this political programme was followed by acts of provocation, ominous clouds started to gather over the region. As soon as Israel announced the opening of the tunnel in Jerusalem, the spark of conflagration was touched off.

Furthermore, the economic siege that was laid against the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territories is still in place, intensifying the psychological pressure on the people and aggravating living conditions. Unemployment has reached 56 per cent. Israel has restricted the movement of imports and exports, weakening the economy of the Palestinian people, that it had destroyed in the first place.

Thus, the Palestinian people continue to suffer heavy losses; 4,500 Palestinian prisoners continue to languish in Israeli jails. To this day, Israel has refused to allow the return of displaced Palestinians who were forced to leave their homes as a result of Israeli aggression in 1967. Security Council resolutions and the accords reached with Israel provide for a four-member committee composed of the Palestine Liberation Organization, Egypt, Israel and Jordan to discuss modalities for the return of displaced persons to their homeland. Yet that committee has failed to make any progress owing to the procrastination of the Israeli authorities.

The Israeli Government's slogan is "Peace for the sake of peace." That means emptying the negotiations of their political contents, denying international legality and ignoring the political provisions contained in President George Bush's initiative. It deliberately ignores the land-for-peace formula. Mr. Netanyahu has called for negotiations without preconditions, as if he thought political negotiations could be founded on shifting sands, without any principles or guidelines to govern them. That in itself is enough to create a vicious circle of events and means nothing other than an attempt to kill time.

Following Israel's economic siege of the Palestinian territories some thought that the issue was purely economic and that it had no political foundations. The fact is that the root cause was political, not economic, even though, owing to the vast suffering caused the Palestinian people as a result of increasing unemployment and the decline in per capita income, its results have been economic indeed. The Israeli occupation is the primary cause for these woes since that occupation is the culmination of terrorism and a source of tension because of the brutal, oppressive and harassing measures Israel has enacted and its continuing blockade of Palestinian territories, not to mention other violations.

Mr. Netanyahu appears to believe that an arrogant use of power is an effective means of bringing the Palestinians under control and safeguarding the security of Israel. The entire world can bear witness to the fact that the Palestinian police forces have maintained law and order in the areas under their control in spite of all the difficulties and odds they face. Today, Israeli tanks are assaulting towns from which it had withdrawn and attacking the Palestinian police forces that are maintaining order in those towns. They are also using helicopters and heavy machine-guns. Instead of invading towns, Israel should have withdrawn its forces from Hebron, implemented the redeployment plan and completed its withdrawal from other Palestinian territories.

Yesterday in the General Assembly Hall we heard several statements by heads of delegations that emphasized time and again the need to preserve peace in the Middle East. The thrust of those statements was that the peace process must be kept on track. At the same time, the rights of that region's peoples to self-determination, independence and security were also stressed. We subscribe to the belief that peace cannot be attained unless the Palestinian people realize their right to self-determination and to build an independent State. However, if the Israeli measures continue, the peace process is in mortal peril and deaths would be inevitable.

An Israeli witness has said that current Israeli practices do not lead to peace but, rather, serve to create a vacuum in the Middle East region. We have heard Mr. Peres himself say this on American television. Yet listen to the words of Mr. Netanyahu addressing the Israeli Knesset, words reminiscent of that 1940s European leader who called for racial supremacy and spoke of security and settlement:

(spoke in English)

> "Zionism is not dead, even though in some circles it has been relegated to quotation marks, we have a wonderful youth waiting to mobilize for national tasks. We will encourage the spirit. We will encourage pioneering settlements in the Land of Israel, in the Negev, in Galilee, in Judea and Samaria and in the Golan. The settlers are the real pioneers of our day, and they deserve support and appreciation."

(spoke in Arabic)

Is that not reminiscent of a similar speech delivered some 50 years ago? That is the true nature of the political programme adopted by the Netanyahu Government of Israel. Those are the measures that have led to this explosion inside the occupied Palestinian territories.

I have just outlined the most recent developments in the occupied Palestinian territories since the election of Mr. Netanyahu, which has led to a greater number of seats in the Knesset being occupied by increasingly radical and extremist forces following the assassination of Mr. Yitzhak Rabin, an assassination that demonstrated the depth of fundamentalism and terrorism within Israeli society itself.

When United States President Bush put forward his initiative on 6 March 1991, after the Gulf War, the Palestinian National Council agreed to enter into the peace process. We participated in the Madrid Peace Conference in the hope that it would be a historic opportunity, one that might not recur. The Palestinian National Council's approval revealed a genuine desire to achieve its goals. It also underscored the Palestinian people's genuine desire for peace, which was also evidenced by the ensuing widespread demonstrations throughout the entire West Bank in which the populace placed roses in the bayonets and gun barrels of the Israeli forces to express their hopes for peace and coexistence.

After 22 months of political talks in Washington, D.C., with Mr. Shamir's delegation, no progress had been achieved. Then came the Oslo Agreement, which broke the log-jam and roused hopes that the peace process would achieve tangible and concrete progress on the ground.

The Palestinian people, hundreds of thousands of them, received Chairman Arafat in Gaza when he came to the occupied land in the hope that that day would be the beginning of the end of the Palestinian diaspora and the turning point for the Palestinian people's return to its usurped homeland. Months passed in which we saw stalling and procrastination on many occasions, and efforts to back out of the implementation of obligations under the agreements reached. But the souls of the Palestinian people held the fervent hope that change would come in the near future.

Alas, today we see all doors closed in the path of peace, and the proof of that is the intransigent stance and the provocative acts of the Israeli Government. We have come here to put the whole case before this Council, which is the supreme organ responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security. We reiterate our hope and desire for the establishment of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace that would ensure legitimate Palestinian rights, including the right to self-determination, the establishment of its independent state and the return of the Palestinian refugees to the homeland from which they were evicted.

We also wish to reiterate and emphasize our commitment to the underpinnings of the peace process, which calls for Israel's withdrawal from all occupied Arab territories and Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem under the resolutions adopted by this Council and in keeping with the principle that rejects the acquisition by force of the territories of others.

The final stage on the Palestinian track was a litmus test of the intentions and credibility of both parties to implement the agreements concluded. Next, we should start negotiations on the final status, including the central issues in the question of Palestine. These central points include the question of Jerusalem, of the dismantling of settlements, of the return of refugees and of voters. All these issues are governed by international treaties, as well as by resolutions adopted by this august Council.

Allow me to say that the painful events that have taken place in the occupied Palestinian territories are very disturbing. They sprang from the accumulation of simmering tensions, and Israel alone bears the full responsibility for these events. The Council should condemn these events and demand that Israel put an end to its provocative acts and close the tunnel in order to defuse the escalating tensions. We recommend that the Council dispatch a fact-finding mission to call for peace in the occupied territories and to examine in full detail the situation there. Following that fact-finding mission, the Council should take measures to ensure peace and security there.

In closing, the resolutions to be adopted by the Council must emphasize the principles and tenets underpinning the peace process and on the basis of which the Madrid Peace Conference was convened.

The President (*interpretation from French*): The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Israel, His Excellency Mr. David Levy, on whom I now call.

Mr. Levy (*spoke in Hebrew; interpretation provided by the delegation*): Today, the day when the Jewish people in Israel and around the world sit in the

Tabernacle and offer the prayer to the Almighty that he "place the tabernacle of peace over us", is also a day when bereaved families are mourning their loved ones, cut down in their twenties in the recent events, and offering prayers in their memory. Many others stand concerned and pained at the hospital bedsides of the many injured, with a silent prayer for the recovery of their loved ones in their hearts.

On this day I stand here in the face of the orchestrated attempt to place blame on Israel and to portray it as the sole responsible party for the bitter harvest of blood in which so many have lost their lives, Palestinians and Israelis alike. I come to refute in their entirety the distortions of fact which are being spread here regarding the dramatic events of the last days, which have cast such a dark cloud over the entire peace process

No matter what claims may be held against Israel, they in no way justify the incitement to violence and the use of live weapons, especially by those who have been empowered by the agreements to ensure law and order and to prevent incitement. The essence of the peace to which we all aspire is the transformation of patterns of behaviour, replacing threats with dialogue, and violence with conciliation and direct talks between the sides. The atmosphere of escalation, threats and calls for armed struggle will not move us from the fundamental principles which guide our policy: the pursuit of peace while ensuring national and personal security for our citizens.

Israel's desire for peace is enshrined in the declared policy guidelines of the Government. The commitment of the present Government to the agreements signed by its predecessor gives expression to the supreme democratic values which light our path, and is deserving of due recognition from all interested parties.

From the inception of this new Government, Israel has been subjected to calls for the normalization process to be halted and threats of a return to the intifada if Israel does not commit itself in advance to the outcome of the negotiations between us and the Palestinians. Israel has been threatened that if the demands of the other side are not met in their entirety, then it will face an armed struggle against it.

On other fronts, steps have been taken and troops redeployed as a means of sending a message warning Israel that if it does not adopt one specific path and commit itself in advance to the one single outcome demanded by the other side, then the situation in the region will deteriorate and the blame will be placed squarely at Israel's feet. A constant propaganda war is being waged against Israel and its Government, filled with hatred and venom, and carried out without interference and often even with the encouragement of statesmen. Shocking and unprecedented personal insults against Israeli leaders are voiced daily. There is not one country in the world that can accept this, even in the name of peace itself.

Let us remove all doubt. While the official reason for convening this meeting of the Security Council is the opening of the Western Wall tunnel, this is merely a pretence. What we have before us is yet another attempt to dictate to and pressurize Israel as a means of achieving political goals, and to predetermine the outcome of the negotiations. Given, however, the declared purpose of this meeting, it is important, in the light of the distorted perspectives that are being heard from all directions, that we set the record straight regarding the Western Wall tunnel.

This is a 2,500-year-old tunnel which, in ancient times, was used as a water system providing life itself to Jerusalem and its inhabitants. Today, water is of course supplied differently, yet the tunnel remains a symbol of the unique and eternal character of Jerusalem. Today the tunnel forms part of the larger tourist fabric of the city. The tunnel holds no political or religious significance whatsoever. The attribution of a religious nature to this issue is manipulative and baseless, and designed purely to arouse emotions. Our sole intention in opening the exit of the tunnel was to provide greater comfort and safety to the many local visitors — Jews, Christians and Muslims — and the many tourists and pilgrims who come to the Holy City to marvel at its wonders.

The supreme Muslim religious authority in Jerusalem, the Waqf, was informed in advance of our intention to open the tunnel to tourists and visitors. I wish to remind the Council that all measures taken by the Israeli authorities in Jerusalem take into account the needs of the entire population, including the Muslim population, in order to preserve the principle of freedom of worship and free access to the holy sites for all religions.

At no time in Jerusalem's long history has freedom of worship and free access to the holy sites been so painstakingly safeguarded as it has under Israel's authority, to the benefit of all religions. Great pains have been taken to ensure that the opening of the tunnel neither damaged any archaeological or religious sites nor endangered the security or the integrity of any structures in the Old City, be they Islamic or otherwise.

I wish to emphasize that the Western Wall tunnel does not run beneath the Temple Mount, nor does it in any way affect the Al-Aqsa Mosque, as has been claimed, or its foundations. What we are facing here is an attempt to exploit an isolated event for the purpose of conducting a general and orchestrated offensive against Israel.

At this juncture, as we debate the current sensitive and dangerous situation, I strongly urge the participants here to call upon the various regional actors to display caution, reserve and responsibility in both their words and their deeds.

Israel will not allow itself to be placed on trial. Over the last months we have cautioned more than once that words of violence can turn into actions, and that threats of violence are carried out in the end. To our great regret, our fears have now been realized

The President of the Palestinian Authority must exert the authority vested in him to exercise his restraining influence and issue clear and unequivocal instructions to his forces, which are subject to his authority, and to the residents of the autonomous areas to refrain from violence lest there be any further deterioration. This is his responsibility. At this difficult time, I must make it as completely clear as possible that Israel has always been and remains committed to pursuing peace through honouring agreements.

Peace is meant to prevent the spilling of blood, that of our sons and our neighbours alike. Violence and the terrorist actions to which we were subjected only a few short months ago endanger the peace process and threaten all possibilities of bringing about a new reality.

We believe that honouring agreements is an integral element of peace and of the efforts required to achieve it. In the few weeks since assuming the heavy burden of responsibility of government and the mission of running the weighty matters of State, we have had ongoing contacts with the President of the Palestinian Authority, Mr. Yasser Arafat, and his colleagues. The Prime Minister, the Defence Minister and myself have held talks with him, and we have agreed together with the Palestinian side upon a clear structure for resuming the negotiations for discussing and resolving the issues in dispute. We have taken steps to ease the closure, while taking upon ourselves security risks, in the light of the horrendous terrorist attacks in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and elsewhere, which remain fresh in our minds. We have taken decisions also to assist and ease the economic hardship in the autonomous areas.

The place for resolving differences is the negotiating table, and for this, order, stability and security must be restored.

The recent events are serious and grave. Nevertheless, we must not lose hope. Now we must make every effort to prevent further deterioration, to restore quiet and to renew negotiations and dialogue. We must remember that continued escalation, violence and expressions of hatred may prevent any possibility of advancing towards peace.

Once more, I call upon the President of the Palestinian Authority, Yasser Arafat, to act in accordance with the responsibilities vested in him.

I hope that this Security Council debate will not be allowed to become yet one more phase in the attempt to isolate and impose unacceptable positions on the Government of Israel. The Council must not lend its hand to the atmosphere of escalation. This will serve no purpose.

I come from Jerusalem and I shall return there. Jerusalem is a mosaic of many colours towards which countless eyes and prayers are turned from all corners of the earth. Jerusalem has always been and remains the heart and soul of the Jewish people, the eternal and historic capital of Israel. The annals of the Jewish people are embedded in her very essence, her stones, her pathways and hilltops. Jerusalem, as its Hebrew name testifies, is the city of peace. Let us all, Jew and Arab alike, raise a prayer and heed the lessons of recent days, and embark on a new path of dialogue.

We are pained by the bloodshed. The years of struggle, violence, bloodshed and pain have led us nowhere. We must build a new future. Let us not miss the opportunity.

I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of September and on the very able manner in which you are conducting the affairs of the Council.

The President (*interpretation from French*): I thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Israel for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Egypt, His Excellency Mr. Amr Moussa.

Mr. Moussa (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): At the outset, I would especially like to congratulate you personally, Mr. President, as you assume the presidency of the Security Council at this very delicate stage.

The Council is meeting today to look into the situation in the Middle East in the wake of the bloody developments in Jerusalem and the other occupied Palestinian areas. This sends a very important message. The Arab-Israeli negotiations, which started in Madrid five years ago, are facing problems, and the march towards peace is stalling. The Security Council, which is responsible for maintaining international peace and security, must therefore intervene.

The events in East Jerusalem and other Palestinian areas came as no surprise for those who have been monitoring the evolution of the peace process. Nor is the direction taken by Israeli policy surprising. It is like a dark tunnel into which it is trying to drag the rest of the Middle East. It is trying to circumvent the pillars of the peace process and its basic points as had been agreed, and to relinquish the commitments made in that framework.

Yes, Mr. President, what happened was no surprise for us in Egypt. Nor was it a surprise for you. We had issued warnings at the highest levels in Egypt; we had warned the Israelis about the outcome of this policy. President Hosni Mubarak more than once said that only evil and harm would come of this policy — and this is exactly what has happened. The policy of pressure, blockade, closing of the territories, demolition, imprisonment and the lack of respect for commitments can yield only frustration and outbursts, blood and victims. No one can be blamed except the Israeli policy — its shameful stalling and the relinquishment of its commitment to the peace process.

We strongly condemn the changes made by Israel in Jerusalem, as well as its incitation to action and the challenges it has issued. We also condemn the settler policy, which will never be recognized by the international community because it is illegal. In spite of all of this, the matter goes beyond what happened yesterday. It takes on a totally different dimension that is really very dangerous, namely the Israeli position *vis-à-vis* the peace process — not only on the Palestinian track, but also on other Madrid tracks: the Palestinian track, the Syrian track and the international Arab tracks. What we see is Israel moving away from the basic points that have been agreed.

Thus, first, the Israeli policy avoids any mention of the principle of land for peace or its implementation; and this destroys the basis for that process.

Second, the Israeli Government went back to the settlement policy in spite of a direct reference in the Oslo agreement to avoid any measures that might affect negatively the outcome of the negotiations and the final status of the territories.

Third, the Israeli Government once again has sought to change the demographic and geographical composition of Jerusalem, which is subject to negotiations under the documents annexed to the Oslo agreement. The final status of Jerusalem has yet to be defined or determined. It has to be determined through negotiations and not unilaterally, either by Israel or by Palestine.

Fourth, the Israeli Government refused to implement the redeployment agreement in Hebron despite the official provision to that effect in the agreement and its own commitment to that implementation.

Fifth, Israel would not redeploy its forces in other areas agreed to — the B and C areas — in accordance with the transitional agreement on redeployment in these areas as of 7 September 1996.

Sixth, the Israeli Government would not resume negotiations on the final status, in accordance with the provisions of the agreement.

Seventh, the Israeli Government has gone back to the policy of committing acts of aggression against civilians, as happened in the past two days when the Israeli Army fired on civilians, killing more than 60 Palestinians and injuring hundreds.

Eighth, Israeli forces have entered Palestinian towns and cities. This destroys the idea of autonomy. We are talking about two distinct and separate societies — two neighbouring entities. We are not working to establish one entity that would dominate another. That is not an Arab-Israeli peace. That is an Israeli peace. And it will never be achieved under any circumstances.

Ninth, this all comes in addition to the Israeli economic blockade. This Israeli policy has been carried out against the Palestinian entity and the Palestinian Authority, not only through closing the territories and imposing the blockade, but also by eliminating any opportunities for economic advancement or economic independence for the Palestinians.

Tenth, add to this the policies of imprisonment, and what one gets is a dark picture of the Israeli-Palestinian

track — the result of the very unwise and aggressive policy, that has been adopted by the Israeli Government.

Not only does this eliminate the prospects for the Palestinian-Israeli track — but it also affects the other tracks. We will hear the Foreign Ministers of Lebanon and Syria speak of the stalling developments on both tracks.

In view of this, perhaps the Council will recall what the Cairo summit decided last June — that the peace option is a strategic Arab option that would require a serious commitment by the other side, namely Israel. Perhaps members would also recall the message sent by that summit that the lack of commitment by Israel or any reversal of its position *vis-à-vis* the commitments to the peace process would lead to a setback for the whole process, with all the implications and the dangers inherent in plunging the region back into the cycle of violence, thus forcing all Arab countries to reconsider their positions in the peace process with Israel. The Israeli Government bears full responsibility for this.

This is the framework to which we, as Arab countries, all have committed ourselves. The peace option is a strategic option, but we cannot accept a reversal of position by Israel. We cannot accept a threat to peace or a threat to the legitimate national rights of the Palestinians or to the return of land — Syrian or Lebanese.

We have invested so much time and have made so many efforts to create a framework for peace, in Egypt in particular. We have aimed, since the very beginning of the peace process to close the file on the Israeli-Arab conflict and to open a new chapter of cooperation, understanding and coexistence. We still believe in this, and we still have this goal. But it cannot be implemented by one side alone.

Therefore, I call upon the Israeli Government to review and reconsider its policy because its outcome is very dangerous. The alternative to peace is something that the international community cannot bear because it will jeopardize stability and peace in the whole region. No one can accept this. We want an Arab-Israeli peace that is balanced: right for right, security for security, and commitment for commitment. Peace will be established only on this basis. Mr. Netanyahu spoke about reciprocity. This is reciprocity — security for security, commitment for commitment,and right for right. We all share in this responsibility — all the parties, the two sponsors, the permanent members, the Security Council and the international community at large.

We must be serious in what we do. Egypt is ready, as it has always been, to assist in putting the peace process back on track. But we do not want the exploitation of photo opportunities to deceive public opinion. Israel must relinquish the negative policy it has pursued and must implement its commitments, foremost among which are to withdraw from Hebron, to end its interference in the Palestinians' internal affairs, and to stop blockading and killing them.

The Security Council must assume its obligations and responsibilities in maintaining peace and security. It must send the strong, clear and unequivocal message to the Israeli Government that policies of violence against civilians, of provoking religious sentiment, of relinquishing contractual obligations and of political prevarication will not lead to a positive outcome. The new Middle East must be based on mutual respect without violence and on making sacrifices to attain peace.

We extend our hand for peace, for a just peace that will lead to a balanced, just coexistence between the Arabs and Israelis.

The President (*interpretation from French*): I thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Egypt for his kind words addressed to me.

(*spoke in English*)

I now call on the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom, His Excellency The Right Honourable Malcolm Rifkind.

Mr. Rifkind (United Kingdom): Mr. President, thank you for your welcome. It is a great honour to be present at this important debate. The fighting over the last two days between Palestinians and Israelis has shocked us all. The casualties suffered by both sides are very high. We have not seen violence on this scale since the Oslo agreements were reached and brought such hopes of peace.

Sadly, violence was predictable. Despite progress in some important areas, fires of frustration have been smouldering because of the lack of progress on Hebron, the continuation of the closures, which Palestinians see as collective punishment and which carries a heavy economic penalty, and the moves to develop settlements. And the decision to open a tunnel in the Old City of Jerusalem, following on the earlier demolition of a

Palestinian community centre, added the fuel that produced conflagration.

But the incidents of the last few days are only symptoms of the wider deterioration of the peace process, which has now reached grave and serious proportions. Our priority must be to put out the blaze. Only then can we work to help the parties to engage seriously in real peace negotiations, which are the only way to avoid such outbursts in future.

Urgent action is needed to deal both with the immediate problem and with the underlying deterioration in the peace process. And what is required is first of all, I would suggest, a moratorium on the opening up of the tunnel to tourism; secondly, a meeting between the two leaders, Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Arafat, at which agreement can be reached on immediate steps to cease the fighting; thirdly, the earliest possible engagement to bring about the implementation of outstanding issues under the Interim Agreement, starting with Hebron — this would demonstrate by deeds and not just by words an unequivocal commitment to the peace process; and fourthly, as King Hussein has proposed, agreement to an international commission to work out ways of dealing with the sensitive questions that arise in Jerusalem on archaeological matters. The United Kingdom would be happy to participate.

No one can pretend these steps are easy. The fighting has made negotiating much more difficult, but it has also made it more necessary. The United Kingdom urges the leaders most closely concerned to make the leap of faith that is needed to snatch progress back from the jaws of such a setback. And this calls for statesmanship of a high order. It is a great challenge, but it is not an impossible one. Who can forget that in even more difficult circumstances in South Africa, Nelson Mandela and F. W. de Klerk were able to rise to an even greater challenge? And so Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Arafat can, and ought to be able to, count on the support of the Security Council and the international community if they bring the violence of the last days and hours to an end and then engage with renewed determination and urgency in the work for lasting peace, to which both have committed themselves. The way forward is clear. It needs courage to take it. But the alternative is not one to contemplate.

The President (*interpretation from French*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of France, His Excellency Hervé de Charette.

Mr. De Charette (France) (*interpretation from French*): I should like to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency and on your very skilled leadership.

The tragic events that are occurring in the Palestinian territories are the most serious we have seen in many years. This brings us back to a time we thought had passed. This situation is a challenge to the international community. It poses a major risk for the peace process. This process, which has been at a standstill for several months now, is in danger of dying if the international community does not react quickly and with resolve.

In fact, these events are not surprising. France, for its part, for some time now has been warning the Israeli authorities about growing frustrations in the Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem. I met with Mr. Levy at the beginning of September, and recently the President of France met with Prime Minister Netanyahu. In both cases we insisted on the urgency of concrete measures that would allow for an improvement in the daily lives of the Palestinians.

The incident that touched off the crisis might appear to be of secondary importance. Mr. Netanyahu insisted heavily on this point. Actually, that argument is probably accurate. The opening of a tunnel is less serious than many of the measures taken, which have directly affected the lives of Palestinians: the closure of territories, the travel ban on non-resident Palestinians to Jerusalem, the destruction of homes, the expansion of settlements, and so on. But this latest step, taken in a highly symbolic place, shows, if not deliberate provocation, then at least a serious psychological error. It is obvious that the Israeli authorities miscalculated the emotional reaction of Palestinian public opinion, which is very sensitive to anything that occurs within the perimeter of the mosques.

France is deeply troubled by the surge in violence and by the growing number of victims. Last night, I was in contact with President Arafat, who reported 69 deaths and more than 1,100 injured. These confrontations resulted in casualties primarily among the civilian population. We also, of course, deplore the injuries and deaths among the Israeli army as well as those among the Palestinian police, which confronted each other for the first time.

France is concerned that an important provision of the agreements concluded between the Palestinian

Authority and the Israeli Government has been deliberately violated. The fact that the Israeli Army has entered parts of Zone A, which is under Palestinian control, is, in fact, contrary to the letter and spirit of the Taba Agreement.

We should shed as full a light as possible, as Mr. Netanyahu himself has said he wishes to do, on these tragic events — on how they unfolded, their causes and those responsible. There can be no doubt that, primarily, they reflect the exasperation of the Palestinian population. According to the Israeli authorities, the current legislation is the result of a deliberate campaign against Israel which has the assent of President Arafat. It is difficult for us to subscribe to that analysis, even though it may be possible that certain dubious elements have tried to take advantage of a difficult situation.

France hopes that everything possible will be done to restore calm, bring the situation under control and avoid circumstances in which the most extremist factions can exploit the situation. In this respect, we feel that there is as much composure and desire for calm on the side of the Israeli authorities as on that of President Arafat. For its part, France has endeavoured, through many contacts that the President of the Republic and I have had with Mr. Netanyahu and President Arafat, to help to calm a situation which, if nothing is done soon, is in danger of moving beyond the control of the local authorities.

France is giving and will continue to give its tireless and determined help to the search for peace. It supports efforts from any quarter aimed at resolving this crisis.

For several months now, some have seemed to believe that another peace would be possible, based on other principles, that would conform more closely to their own interests. I say, solemnly, that only the complete implementation of the Madrid, Oslo and Taba Agreements is capable of restoring peace. Only the fundamental principles established by those Agreements — that is, land for peace and the right of the Palestinians to self-determination — can provide an acceptable basis and favourable prospects for negotiations.

It is either that or violence; respect for principles or confrontation; agreements or war. France believes that the Egyptian initiative, which led to this meeting, has come at an opportune time and can help contribute to a return to calm thinking. The deliberations of the Security Council will help to restore peace once the Council confirms the need to return to the peace process on the bases that I have laid out.

We believe that two measures are imperative. The Israeli authorities must return the tunnel under the Holy City to its original state. According to certain information, the city of Jerusalem may have decided to close the tunnel on a provisional basis. Such a positive decision should be confirmed and made permanent. Furthermore, the Israeli troops that have entered zone A must withdraw as soon as possible.

We should also clearly call upon the parties to resume negotiations on the peace process on the basis of established principles and implement without delay the agreements already concluded. In this respect, the evacuation of Hebron and the relaxation of security measures in the territories would constitute necessary and urgent measures.

We must not so much condemn as avoid similar events in the future. In this respect, we approve the idea of an immediate meeting between Mr. Netanyahu and President Arafat in order to resume negotiations at the highest level to allow the complete implementation of agreements that have been signed and the achievement of an agreement on the final status of the Palestinian territories in order to build a just and lasting peace.

The President (*interpretation from French*): I thank the representative of France for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Mr. Yevgeniy Primakov.

Mr. Primakov (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): Russia reacted with great concern to the bloodshed in Jerusalem, Ramallah, Nablus and Gaza. We have not seen such a dangerous situation since 1982. We must understand something: It would appear that this situation is a direct result not only of reckless activity in respect of the delicate issue of religious sentiment, but also of the fact that over the past four months the peace process in the Middle East has come to a virtual standstill and that Israel has even begun to draw back from agreements that it entered into. This took place after a new leader came to power in that country.

The past four months were effectively a prelude to the opening by the Israeli authorities of a tunnel directly adjacent to one of the holiest places of the Islamic world, the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Given the seriousness of the situation, Russia supported the request of the Arab Group for an urgent discussion of this issue at a formal meeting

of the Security Council. We believe that this meeting will be an important step in the search for a way out of the current impasse.

Russia strongly urges all the interested parties to show maximum restraint and to avoid action that may lead to a further deterioration of the situation. We are convinced that breaking the vicious circle of confrontation can be achieved only through political means. We are also convinced that the situation now requires not just close contact between the parties if the vicious spiral of violence is to be broken quickly, but also an urgent resumption of talks on an overall Middle East settlement. Russia is one of the sponsors of the peace process and cannot acquiesce to a situation in which the first hard-won fruits of the peace negotiations are sacrificed to tactical considerations and internal political manoeuvring. There must be a resumption of the peace process, not with a *tabula rasa*, but on the basis of compliance with agreements already entered into. Only those agreements — not just the written agreements; I must emphasize, but also those reached in the framework of the Madrid process — can, we are deeply convinced, put an end to the dangerous escalation of violence. Immediate progress in all negotiations on the basis of the principle of "land for peace" and Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) on Lebanon, is the way forward.

Russia has cautioned that the longer instability persists in the peace process, the greater becomes the risk of being hurled back to confrontation. In the tragic events of recent days, we can clearly see what that would lead to. Russia has already taken steps and made contacts aimed at normalizing the situation and encouraging dialogue and cooperation between the Government of Israel and the Palestinian national Authority. The most important thing now is not to allow a further escalation of the dispute on both sides. This applies to the interests of Palestinians and Israelis alike and to the aspirations of the international community as a whole.

It is no coincidence that, in the Security Council today, many countries are represented by their Ministers for Foreign Affairs. This not only reflects our concern about events in the Middle East, but will make it possible for us to take more effective action to normalize the situation. However, to achieve this we need to adopt a resolution today that is acceptable to all members of the Security Council. It must be done today. Otherwise, we are very much afraid that those who are guilty of the bloodshed will receive the wrong signal.

The President (*interpretation from French*): Before I call on the next speaker, I wish, on behalf of the Council, to welcome to the Council table the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Honduras, Mr. Delmer Urbizo Panting.

(*spoke in English*)

The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, Mr. Ali Alatas.

Mr. Alatas (Indonesia): Let me begin, Sir, by extending to you my warm congratulations and those of my delegation on your assumption of the presidency at a time when the Council is considering an issue of critical importance to all of us. Your proven diplomatic skills assure us that our deliberations will be brought to a successful conclusion.

I should also like to extend to your predecessor, Ambassador Tono Eitel of Germany, our deep appreciation for the exemplary manner in which he guided the work of the Council last month.

This meeting has been called to address a highly volatile — indeed, explosive — situation in the occupied territories, which threatens to engulf the Middle East in the all too familiar violence and bloodshed that we had hoped had become part of the past. For quite some time now, Indonesia has observed with deepening concern the progressive deterioration of the situation in the occupied territories. The ominous manifestations of this deterioration — Israel's confiscation of Arab land and establishment of new settlements; its failure to lift the closure of Palestinian territories; its refusal to withdraw its forces from Hebron; its attempts to change the geographic and demographic conditions; and its failure to implement the provisions of the 1993 Declaration of Principles and subsequent agreements — have again turned the region into a flash point of crisis fraught with far-reaching consequences. We are clearly confronted by a case of bad faith on the part of Israel and by Israel's manifest lack of commitment to the peace process. Israel is gravely endangering the peace process by taking measures contrary to it both in letter and in spirit. Moreover, it has spurned the resumption of negotiations based on the interim accords and the principle of land for peace.

It cannot be denied that the most dangerous development that precipitated the current cycle of violence was Israel's provocative action of opening a new entrance to the tunnel which runs along the western wall

of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, triggering an open confrontation resulting in death and injuries to scores of civilians. This flare-up of violence is reminiscent of the era of the *intifada* and reflects the deep frustration and anger of the Palestinians at obstructions to the peace process by the Government of Israel. My delegation strongly condemns the indiscriminate use of force in Jerusalem, Ramallah, Nablus and Gaza against the Palestinian population. Further aggravating the situation is the unprecedented and direct confrontation between the Israeli army and the Palestinian police force.

The unilateral action of the Israeli Government to change the facts on the ground regarding the status of Jerusalem is in utter disregard of the timetable set by the 1993 Declaration of Principles scheduling this critical issue for the final phase of negotiations, in May 1997. It is therefore imperative that the Security Council, in unambiguous terms, call upon Israel to close the tunnel and return it to its initial state before the crisis. We further call for the cessation of all acts detrimental to the safety and well-being of the Palestinian people.

The traumatic events that are currently unfolding need to be urgently addressed by both parties. We urge the Government of Israel to resume negotiations with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to resolve this crisis in accordance with the provisions of the Declaration of Principles and subsequent agreements. Negotiations in good faith must be relaunched in order to arrive at a just and comprehensive settlement. Reneging on earlier commitments and ignoring the issues at stake, and especially the inalienable rights of the Palestinians, will not resolve the core issue of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The peace process must move forward and become irreversible. For this to materialize, the Government of Israel must honour its obligations under the relevant agreements. Peace is a challenging task, but it must be pursued relentlessly lest more blood be spilled.

The President: I thank the Foreign Minister of Indonesia for the kind words he addressed to me and to my predecessor.

(*spoke in French*)

The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Chile, His Excellency Mr. José Miguel Insulza.

Mr. Insulza (Chile) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I wish to begin by reiterating what I said yesterday in the General Assembly. We state our deep concern at the serious crisis in the Middle East peace process, a process we have supported since its beginnings in Madrid and Oslo.

Few international agreements have aroused so much hope and relief in the international community. From the beginning, this peace process was viewed as going beyond the parties to the conflict, and proved that even the most complex and difficult problems on the international agenda could be resolved with political courage, enabling age-old enemies gradually to become partners in a new Middle East reality of security and respect for all. We must not give up hope that this remains possible. Unfortunately, the peace process has recently faced many obstacles, and frustration was building up until the recent eruption in Jerusalem, which is the reason for today's meeting.

Jerusalem is a holy city for a number of cultures and religions, and we all understand that a delicate balance must be maintained. It is a highly sensitive place, where history has shown us that there for every action there is a reaction, and where subjective factors largely prevail over objective analysis. The level of accumulated tension was so high that a single spark sufficed to ignite the flames we are regrettably witnessing. In the course of but a few days, many have lost their lives, both Palestinians and Israelis, and hundreds have been wounded.

It is essential for the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority to reduce the tension that this new tragedy has caused. We therefore call upon both parties to do everything possible to calm the situation and resume dialogue in the framework of respect for existing agreements and for the beliefs of the populations concerned.

A situation that a few months ago was ripe with opportunity must not be allowed to become a mere parenthetical interval. There have been men and women of determination; statesmen who were able to see beyond the limitations of the present and to break down the walls that prevented Palestinians and Israelis from beginning a peace process. In the light of this success, we cannot permit the triumph of certain minority groups which are against peace and which speak with the voice of extremism and espouse a culture of death: a step backwards in the peace process would only benefit them. We in the international community must cooperate so that the language of violence and intolerance does not

supplant that of dialogue and understanding in the long-suffering region of the Middle East.

Chile is located far from that region, but the many Chileans of Palestinian and Jewish origin live together in peace and harmony. We have the largest population of Palestinian origin in Latin America, and it pains us to see it affected by the grave situation its people are facing.

Chile maintains good relations with Israel and with the Arab countries and has a great wish to see the peace process in the Middle East continue to move forward. To this end we are willing to help in any way we can.

Chile shares some of the proposals that have been formulated within the framework of this crisis and at this meeting of the Security Council. It is necessary, of course, to suspend use of the tunnel which gave rise to the controversy, but above all it is necessary to renew the process of implementing the peace agreements and the resolutions of this Council on the Middle East.

The President (*interpretation from French*): The next speaker is the Vice Chancellor and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany, His Excellency Mr. Klaus Kinkel.

Mr. Kinkel (Germany) (*spoke in German; interpretation provided by the delegation*): Allow me first to congratulate you, Mr. President, on the way in which you have steered the Security Council through a very difficult month.

The recent dramatic developments in the Palestinian territories and in Jerusalem fill us with grave concern. I would like, on behalf of my Government, to express our sympathy for the victims and relatives of the victims on both sides. The Federal Government will immediately make available financial assistance for the medical treatment and medical care of the victims.

The recent incidents have shocked the region and endangered the process of peace and autonomy, which is so vital to the region. This is a process without alternative, a process that must continue. Those on both sides who are in a position of political responsibility must remain level-headed at this time. We must do everything in our power to put an immediate end to the violence and bloodshed; there must be no further casualties, no more people killed and wounded.

Following other encouraging developments of the last few years, and now that the cessation of the East-West conflict has put an end to so many awful situations, the developments in the Palestinian territories and in the Middle East have become very promising. There must be no return to violence and terror. I believe that on such a day, on such an occasion, it should also be said quite clearly that what has already been achieved in the Middle East peace process has created a situation in which both sides were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. I think this must be said.

A return to the negotiating table is indispensable now. I believe we should appeal to both sides to try to negotiate in a constructive manner, oriented towards achieving the objectives they are working for. What must now take place is a meeting between Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Arafat. This is of course of central importance. Yesterday I tried to make a contribution towards this end in numerous telephone conversations, as did Federal Chancellor Helmut Kohl, and I warmly welcome the initiative taken by the Egyptian President, who invited the parties to Cairo.

Of course, the weapons must remain silent, but what we need above all is a general de-escalation of the situation. Another factor I deem to be very important is that the confidence that has been lost should be restored, and this applies to both sides. I therefore believe that the meeting not only has to take place, but that it ought to lead to concrete results.

My third point is that I should like to appeal to the parties to implement the agreements already entered into, to stick to their spirit and their letter of them, because I believe that only in this way can we bring about a calming of the situation.

The issue of Hebron will have to be solved, and of course — and here I refer back to the speech I made earlier this week to the General Assembly — a solution has to be found to the situation of the people sealed off in the Palestinian territories, because the people have to get the feeling that the peace agreement is paying off, that it is something from which they too benefit. Both sides must contribute to avoiding an escalation of the situation. And of course each side must respect the religious feelings of the other, and must respect the holy sites. Here I warmly welcome the announcement that the tunnel is to be closed.

We Europeans feels a special responsibility, and therefore Prime Minister Major, President Chirac, and Federal Chancellor Kohl urgently appealed to Prime

Minister Netanyahu and President Arafat today. They said, "You have to sit down at one table, you have to regain confidence in each other. The peace process has to continue."

I would like to appeal to all parties involved: please let reason return. The whole world is looking to this region, filled with a great feeling of hope, and at the same time scared that the peace process might have come to an end, might be in danger. We have the feeling that a renewed effort is called for now. We must not allow the peace process to die together with the victims. That would be terrible, but there is still time.

The President (*interpretation from French*): I thank the Vice Chancellor and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Poland, His Excellency Mr. Dariusz Rosati.

Mr. Rosati (Poland): Let me congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of September. As this turbulent month is coming to an end, I wish to thank you for the efforts you have made to ensure the efficient work of the Council.

The Polish delegation is gravely concerned about the escalation of tensions in Palestine. The outbreak of violence and continuing open confrontation may jeopardize the results of the peace efforts already achieved, destabilize the situation in the whole region and endanger the continuation of the Middle East peace process.

Our concern has been aroused even more by a visible gradual aggravation of the crisis, which appears to be steadily growing worse and more dangerous.

We deeply regret the loss of lives and suffering resulting from the recent tragic developments in Jerusalem, Ramallah, Bethlehem and other places.

The incidents that took place in Palestine have particularly grave significance since they involved an open exchange of fire between the Israeli security forces and the police of the new Palestinian Authority — the first incident of this kind since the beginning of the peace process.

It is therefore important that the parties to the conflict take decisive and immediate steps to defuse the current situation. One important step in that direction could be the restoration of the status quo in Jerusalem's Old City. It is equally important that the parties refrain from actions that might lead to a further escalation of tensions.

We call upon the Israeli Government and the Palestinian authorities to respect and implement the agreements achieved, as well as to avoid creating problems that are bound to impede the continuation of constructive dialogue between them. This, in our view, is the only way to lead to lasting peace in the Middle East.

We commend diplomatic efforts made by other States, including the members of the Security Council, to encourage both parties involved to desist from perpetrating further acts of violence and to meet at the negotiating table to seek a peaceful settlement of their differences. We express our earnest hope that the parties to the conflict will respond to those efforts in a positive way.

Being among the countries that have been consistently supporting the Middle East peace process initiated in Oslo and Madrid, the Polish delegation is of the view that this process constitutes an important factor related to global international security and stability.

We deeply believe that the question of Palestine can be resolved by peaceful means and confidence-building, through the cooperation of both parties concerned.

The President (*interpretation from French*): I thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Poland for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Honduras, His Excellency Mr. Delmer Urbizo Panting, on whom I now call.

Mr. Urbizo Panting (Honduras) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I wish first to congratulate you warmly, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council and for the manner in which you are guiding the debate of this very important meeting.

Honduras has always favoured the attainment of a just and lasting peace that would guarantee security and stability in the Middle East region. We have always maintained that full respect for the agreements concluded between the Palestinian people and the Government of Israel is an essential element in the peace process.

For this reason, we view with just concern the serious situation brought about by Israeli actions in the

Al-Aqsa Mosque in the occupied Palestinian territory of East Jerusalem, and the attacks against Palestinian civilians who protested against such actions which, unfortunately, resulted in dozens of dead and wounded. The confrontations this week in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Al Birah, Hebron and Nablus are acts which my delegation regrets because they jeopardize the peace process in the Middle East.

While deploring the attacks against Palestinian civilians, Honduras believes that the Israeli measures to alter the legal status and demographic composition of Jerusalem are null and void, and contrary to the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 1949, to the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and to the agreements concluded by the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Israeli Government.

The negative impact of the continuation of this dangerous situation for the Palestinian people and for the prospects of peace cannot be ignored. That is why we believe that the measures taken by Israel that affect the rights of the Palestinian people in the occupied territory of East Jerusalem must cease immediately. The special character that the city of Jerusalem has for the Palestinian people must be respected.

My delegation therefore appeals to both parties — for the sake of the peace process and out of respect for the agreements — put an end to this dangerous situation, so as to be able to restore peace to the region. It is essential that this Council contribute to the early settlement of this conflict by prescribing measures to prevent its escalation.

The President (*interpretation from French*): I thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Honduras for his kind words addressed to me.

There are many speakers still remaining. However, in view of the lateness of the hour, I intend, with the concurrence of the Council, to suspend the meeting now.